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THE GLORY OF THE LATTER HOUSE.

A S E R M O N,

PREACHED IN ST. JOHN'S CHAPEL,

ON

The First Sunday in Lent, 1857.

BY

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ASSISTANT MINISTER OF TRINITY CHURCH, NEW YORK.

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DEAR SIR,

At the suggestion of a number of your Parishioners, we would request that the Sermon preached by you yesterday, in St. John's Chapel, be given for publication in pamphlet form, that the Public may be rightly informed of what has been doing, and is being done, by the Vestry and Clergy, in our part of Trinity Parish, for the improvement of both the religious and temporal condition of the poor within its district.

Yours truly,

W. KEMBLE,	ROB. HYSLOP,
J. KNIGHT,	A. L. MAODONALD,
R. H. KNIGHT,	THOS. C. BUTLER,
WM. SINCLAIR,	HENRY MERRILL,
A. S. CLAYTON,	THOS. C. M ^c RAE,
O. H. WOODS,	C. V. B. OSTRANDER,
JOHN S. SMITH,	GEO. G. SICKLES.
	S. FITCH,

To the REV. S. H. WESTON,
159 Hudson Street.

To MESSRS. KEMBLE, HYSLOP, and others.

GENTLEMEN:—The Sermon you desire for the press was written without the remotest expectation of being given to the Public. It has no merit, except that of being adapted to the occasion. I give it to you as it was preached, without the change of a single word.

Yours truly,

S. H. WESTON.



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S E R M O N .



“The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts : and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts.”—HAG. ii. 9.

THE Assyrian monarch Nebuchadnezzar, after destroying their city and burning their temple, carried the Jews away captive into Babylon. There they remained in bondage seventy long years. But Cyrus, according to the prophecy, “He shall say to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built, and to the temple, Thy foundations shall be laid,” sent them back to their beloved land, with the means to rebuild the City and Temple.

We can well conceive with what exultation the redeemed Hebrews trod once more their native land, and gazed on the site of their once gorgeous temple. The old patriots who “sat down by the rivers of Babylon and wept;” who “hanged their harps upon the willows, in the midst thereof,” and indignantly refused to “sing the Lord’s song in a strange land”—what patriots! Hear them in their bondage: “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem! let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.” And even now, after a second desolation of eighteen hundred years, the fond Hebrew gazes yearningly eastward towards the Holy

City, listening with straining ear for the echo of the hammer of re-construction, that shall tell him his beloved temple is rising once more in pristine magnificence, to welcome back her faithful to her desecrated altars.

They came back from their cruel bondage of seventy years, the old with memory, the young with hope. They are about to lay anew the foundation of their house of worship. The young had only heard of the edifice reared by the great Solomon. They are full of hope and joy. But there are "ancient men" who remember the former glory; and the recollection chastens their joy, and hushes the notes of triumph. "And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid." "But many of the priests, and chief of the fathers who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice, and many shouted for joy; so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout from the noise of the weeping of the people."

The young had no saddening memories—it was all future with them—and they were jubilant. But the ancient men had a past; and as they recalled the magnificence of the former house, they lifted up their voices and wept. The new was as ample as the old, and on the same foundation as chosen by the wise king; yet they no doubt missed a thousand familiar things, endeared to them by early ties and the holiest associations. Here had they received the Jewish baptism; here had they prayed; here confessed their sins; here offered sacrifice. They missed the goodly stones—the divine glory that flooded the former house—the Urim and the Thummim, the breast-plate, sparkling with its oracular jewelry, and a thousand things, gone for

ever; and so they wept with a loud voice, and would not be comforted.

But the word of the Lord came to them by His prophet, "Who is left among you who saw this house in her first glory—how do you see it now? Is it not in your eyes, in comparison of it, as nothing? Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and WORK: for I am with you, saith the Lord of Hosts."

They missed indeed the cloud of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat, which distinguished the former temple, but the promise was, "The desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts." Instead of the symbol of the Divine Presence, the glowing Shechinah, they were promised the reality, and He, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, was one day to tread those courts, and so was "the glory of this latter house to be greater than of the former."

Brethren, when last Lord's day this house was reopened,* there may have been some present, who witnessed its consecration, fifty years ago; very many who have seen it when it was wont to be crowded with the rank, wealth, genius and worth of this city. Is it not now, in their eyes, in comparison as nothing? And to all former worshippers, was not the unaltered temple dear to you—every part of it? The spot where you were made members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven? The chancel rail where you knelt, to renew those vows in your own person, and the Bishop laid his hands on your head,

* The Rev. Dr. Higbee preached.

with the solemn prayer, "Defend, O Lord, this thy child, with thy heavenly grace, that he may continue thine for ever, and daily increase in thy Holy Spirit more and more, until he come unto thy everlasting kingdom." The altar where you ate and drank the bread and waters of everlasting life;—the venerable pulpit, dear to many of you in a double sense, from the words of comfort there uttered, and by those, now saints in paradise; the very cushions on which you kneeled to confess your sins, and listened to words of comfort and peace, to the contrite and broken heart. Here, too, were pronounced those solemn words, "Till death us do part,"—and when that hour came, here perchance were heard those other words, "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust."

Yes, mothers, here were your babes dedicated to God; brethren, here worshipped your dead, "who now rest from their labors." Sacred associations filled this house, like the Shechinah of old in the temple, which it seemed profanation to disturb,—and when last Sunday you assembled here, you doubtless realized all this. The heart yearned and the eye filled in tribute to the past, for had not each fibre of wood, however unsightly, become sanctified by time and consecrated by the holiest of memories? But let us hope the end to be achieved will warrant all that has been done,—the cost of time, money and feeling;—let uninspired lips dare to repeat the words of the prophet, "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former."

But how is this seemingly rash promise, so like a boast, to be realized? Not surely in your chosen preachers, for who are we, to presume to put on the armor, or wield the sword of the giants that have fallen.

We occupy, but, alas! we cannot fill the places of the illustrious dead. In vain we cry after those that have gone, "my father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." We ask, indeed, a hard thing; the mantle and a double portion of the spirit of Elijah.

Surely not greater in the crowded congregations of the great, the good, and the pure that once thronged these courts. For many have left us or are leaving annually, borne onward by the advancing tide of enterprise, that is sweeping the affluent steadily from our midst. Not greater even in the splendor of our edifice, for though improved, it is essentially the same. No, my brethren, the greater glory predicted is not in the talent, worth, and zeal of your ministers,—not in the numbers and weight of the congregation—here we are wanting—but that coming events plainly indicate, that it is soon to be mainly the Church of the poor of Jesus Christ; and while the wealthy are leaving us and the ministers follow their people, and the neglected multiply around us, the recent large expenditure on this temple is a guarantee, that it shall stand here amid this moral waste, as unchangeable and time-defying as the pyramids of the physical desert, and evermore unto the poor the Gospel shall be preached here, until these massive walls crumble into dust.

Fifty years since was St. John's Chapel consecrated to the service of Almighty God. It was then in advance of the city,—there were few buildings around it. Now, in its expansive energy, the city is more above than below it.

During this period some seventeen places of worship have moved from around us, while the inhabitants below Canal-street have increased some thirty or forty thousands, and the majority of these of the humbler

classes. We do not presume to censure those churches that have followed their wealthy members up town, leaving the indigent behind. Unendowed, they could hardly sustain themselves. But have we not reason to complain, that having abandoned their poor, and followed the tide of affluence, fashion, and intelligence, they should turn in the plenitude of their prosperity, strength and power, and assault those who are fighting "hand to hand" in the deadly breach they have deserted? Is it decorous or just to revile the great charity that is making missionary ground of the destitute regions they have abandoned? I ask what would be the condition of the lower part of this city to-day, if Trinity, St. George's, St. Paul's, and St. John's should imitate their examples? Nay, I ask, not what would it be now—but what its future? A gloomy and despairing one.

It is frightful to contemplate the moral and spiritual destitution that would ensue. But God in his Providence has confided the poor here to Trinity Church. She will accept the sacred trust. There is a great moral battle before her, but she will not desert her standard. She will not blench from the contest. She will assert her high prerogative, vindicate her position, silence her detractors, fulfil her great mission, and see to it, that throughout this wide area of ignorance and sin, unto the poor the Gospel is preached. This chapel will, God being her helper, do her part, and so shall the pledge be redeemed, and "the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former."

And she has begun nobly. We have rooms capable of containing one thousand children. We have an industrial school numbering three hundred, and constantly increasing, and we see no reason why it

may not grow to a thousand, for all the rooms are unoccupied on Saturday. This is a great and economical charity, steadily increasing in usefulness, under the guidance of enlightened zeal and wise management. No questions are asked as to the faith of the applicants:—charity and love are the only creeds there. Such manual instruction is given as may educate them in that branch, on which the future subsistence of many may depend. They are taught to sing, and proper reading is put into their hands. But it is not the learning the use of the needle that is the greatest advantage. They are also taught lessons of purity, gentleness, patience, obedience, and self-respect. Nor are they left only to the care of the kind superintendent. Many earnest minds, gentle hearts, and willing hands are enlisted in this merciful work. God grant they may be strengthened from above, for their self-denying task. Three hundred children! It seems but a drop in the bucket, compared with the neglected thousands around us. But who can estimate the good achieved? Every one of these little girls becomes an active, zealous little missionary. She carries to her home the humanizing, refining influence of her teachers. It makes itself felt in that home, like the sun of Spring. She sings those beautiful hymns she has learned, or reads some touching story from the little book or periodical she has obtained, or repeats some kind counsel she has heard from her instructress. Her companions feel the magic power of those few hours spent under purifying influences, and so the five loaves and two small fishes are multiplied a thousand-fold, in this miracle of love. These few grains, may they not leaven this vast mass of ignorance and crime?

Believe me, brethren, God has other ministers besides those on whom have been laid ordaining hands.

Do not suppose that on Sunday alone the Gospel is preached here, and in this chapel this our only worship. If you will only go on some Saturday morning into you school-room, you will hear eloquent sermons in those hymns, read beautiful homilies in those cheerful faces, fast losing their stolidity under the refining power of love,—witness joyful thanksgivings, too, in those beaming eyes. In the name of the devoted ladies who are carrying on this charity, I invite this congregation to visit the Industrial School, and perhaps some of you may find an hour during the week to devote to this work. That hour may be blessed in your calendar of time, may be the means of rescuing a fellow creature from ignorance and sin. That hour may save a sister from future degradation and shame.

We have, too, our Dorcas Society. Dorcas,—deathless name! Last year it expended nearly four hundred dollars in money, distributed over fourteen hundred articles of wearing apparel, and relieved nearly two hundred families and persons. The report will soon show what has been done this current year, though as much ought not to be expected, trammelled as it has been by the closing of the Church. This mercy so blessed of God, has been characterized by the same wise enterprise, delicate tact and indomitable zeal which distinguished the other.

There have been no variances, disagreements, or feuds to obstruct its onward career. Its members come to work, not to talk, and in harmony and peace have they wrought on, in the service of their blessed Master, awaiting his commendation hereafter, “I was naked and ye clothed me.”

Then there are Sunday Schools—the nursery of Christians—thrown back, true, by the closing of the Church, and the consequent absence of many teachers and pupils; but the superintendents and a few devoted teachers stood their ground, kept together the organization, and now the lambs are coming back to their fold, and the shepherds also. To-day we number four hundred,—why not a thousand? The three rooms are unoccupied on Sunday. We have no difficulty in getting pupils. We want teachers. Many of the young men and women of the congregation have already answered our appeal. We thank you heartily, in the name of Christ, for your prompt response. But we need more. “The harvest is great, the laborers are few.” Will you not come up and help us? Will you not go work in this vineyard of your Lord, young and old? Be sure you will never regret the self-denial it may cost. In your old age—in the hour of death—will it not be a pleasant thought to gild the evening of life, to reflect that you have done your part to fulfil the divine injunction, “Feed my lambs.”

There are thousands around 'us, all astray, with no one to lead them beside the still waters and green pastures. You may find them by hundreds in your streets—meet them in scores on your way to and from Church, learning early the alphabet of crime, lisping early the accents of obscenity and blasphemy.

Perhaps you mistrust yourselves. But you can do something. Eternity alone can disclose how much. Cast into this treasury, if no more, the widow's two mites. Some answer me, “they are not competent,” “do not know enough.” But you can surely learn as fast as your pupils. Many have learned more in teaching, than they ever acquired as scholars. Or, “you

have not the time." That excuse may satisfy your own conscience,—will God accept it? We do not say, it will not cost you self-denial,—but is not this the season of self-denial?

How, I ask, are we to cope with the tremendous spiritual destitution around us, unless we are fellow-laborers together? Are you not responsible for the improvement of the talents confided to your care? Has God given you a light to hide under a bushel? No, my brethren, cavil as you will, you are your brother's keeper, and if one soul is lost, you might have been instrumental in saving, will not its blood be required at your hands? Do you receive and refuse to give? Christ has done so much for you, will you do nothing for him in return? Then hear the words now, ye shall hear again, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me?" Brethren, we invite you to come early to Church some Sunday morning; enter those school-rooms;—see children actually going away, because no one can be found to teach them, and perhaps the Holy Spirit may whisper in your ears the admonition, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not."

We have not spoken of our Parochial school, for it is not yet in operation. We make no appeal to the congregation for this, for it is expected the means to carry it on will be furnished by the Vestry. There is no need of argument to prove the want of such schools. We have in this city (I speak from memory) two hundred and fifty thousand (250,000) children; sixty-two thousand (62,000) of these, the most degraded, do not, will not attend the public schools. The parents will not send them, or they refuse to attend, because, from their poverty and social degradation, they

are looked down upon and despised by the other pupils. So they become candidates for our jails, Houses of Refuge, and prisons. They manage these things better in Prussia. If the parents do not insist on their offspring attending on public instruction, the government takes the matter in hand, sends the children to school, and it is the parents who go to prison. During the last year, our "lay visitor" called on over twenty-four hundred (2,400) families, seeking candidates for baptism, confirmation, Sunday and Industrial schools, investigating the claims of applicants for charity, distributing Bibles, prayer books, and religious tracts. It is intended to canvass, again and again, thoroughly, every part of the district assigned to us. Our baptisms in this Chapel were two hundred (200), confirmations eighty-seven (87); the largest class, it is believed, ever confirmed in the parish (perhaps in the diocese), even when all the Churches united; seventy-seven (77) were added to the Holy Communion; ninety (90) families added to the congregation. It is intended to form a class for lectures on confirmation, this Lenten season. The lectures will commence next Sunday morning at 9 o'clock. If every communicant would induce one candidate to come forward, we might have a still larger class this year than last. We ask you to do so, brethren. So shall we be fellow-laborers together, for our blessed Lord.

In addition to all this, we are endeavoring to introduce congregational music, so that when we assemble to worship on other than Sundays, we may not be compelled to get up, and in a kind of mockery, read, "O come let us *sing* unto the Lord."

This we trust, brethren, is only the beginning of

the end, and the effect of all this, beside the good thus achieved, has been to unite the congregation in bonds of amity, to make them acquainted with each other, and not, as has been too much the case, sitting for years together in adjacent pews as perfect strangers, not even greeting each other as they passed in and out, though animated with the same hopes and fears, professing the same faith, and trusting in the same Redeemer, kneeling side by side at the same altar, in the communion of saints. Thus the rich and the poor meet together; one learning lessons of sympathy, the other of respect, thrice blessed; one tasting the luxury of doing good, the other, the sweet emotions of gratitude.

Let this be the greater glory of this temple, in its renewed beauty. And here it will stand when we shall have all passed away. Another generation will soon occupy our places, and we shall rest from our labors. But let us work while the day lasts, make the world better for having lived in it, leave our mark behind us, to encourage those who come after, and when congregation after congregation shall have worshipped and departed, and the time comes, as come it will, when this city shall have become a wilderness, and these walls crumbled by the hand of time, may we all worship together in that building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens.